

Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is ready to begin implementing and expanding Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) statewide.

During a successful two-year field test administered by our partners at Thrive by Five Washington, we learned a great deal about how to define and measure child care quality, the incentives and supports necessary to assist a child care providers in improving the quality of care offered to children and families and the importance of using existing partnerships to build a system that is sustainable, accountable and nimble.

A strong statewide QRIS is a key strategy in Washington's 10-year statewide Early Learning Plan. It also will make our state more competitive in the upcoming Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge. The federal Office of Child Care recognizes QRIS as an important strategy not only to increase child care quality but to align early learning programs including licensed child care, Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs.

The Field Test: What We Learned

During the two-year field test in five communities (the two Thrive by Five Washington Demonstration Communities—White Center and East Yakima—and Spokane, Clark and Kitsap counties), more than 86 licensed child care facilities tested the Seeds to Success quality standards. The facilities got coaching, professional development and incentives to support their efforts. As a result of their commitment and hard work we learned that:

- **Coaching, training and incentives make a difference.** In a short amount of time, facilities were able to increase their rating using evidence-based measures of quality.
- **Simple is better.** By simplifying the quality standards using only indicators that are evidence-based and supported by research, the cost to administer the system is reduced and there is greater buy-in from the field.
- **Infrastructure is crucial.** There are many roles within a QRIS, and it is important to quickly identify those roles and the entities who will manage them. It also is important to build upon current work and expertise.

Next Steps: Infrastructure Development and the Early Adopters

Having a well-developed infrastructure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities is the first step to move toward statewide expansion. Based on field test results and national data, DEL will move to the following administrative structure in fiscal year 2012. This structure is common to most QRIS around the nation.

- Q (Quality)** —> All agencies promote child care quality.
- R (Rating)** —> The [University of Washington \(UW\)](#) is the lead agency for evaluation, assessment and rating assignment
- I (Improvement)** —> The [Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network](#) is the lead agency for coordinating improvement activities including coaching, technical assistance, professional development and training
- S (System)** —> [DEL](#) is the lead administrative agency for systems development and integration

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Early Adopters

DEL and our QRIS partners entered the first phase of our implementation efforts. In August 2011, we selected 64 licensed child care facilities to become QRIS “early adopters.” The early adopters are field test participants who have committed to continuing their quality improvement efforts as well as assist with broader systems development, including testing a statewide QRIS data base.

The early adopters will continue to receive targeted coaching based on data collected during the field test as well incentives and supports to achieve their quality improvement goals. Early adopters by community/county:

- Clark County— 17 facilities
- Kitsap County— 7 facilities
- Spokane County-14 facilities
- White Center—15 facilities
- East Yakima—11 facilities

During the second phase, based on available funding, DEL hopes to add 100 more facilities. Ratings will become available in fall 2012.

Quality Standards

Washington’s quality standards have been updated based on field test and national research. Washington is one of the few states in the country to use both the Environment Rating Scale and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Further, Washington has a standard devoted specifically to promoting child outcomes and emphasizes the importance of effectively engaging and partnering with families.



Learn more at www.del.wa.gov/care/qris